

**Defeat This Politics of Violence**  
**(A CPI(M) Publication)**  
**August 2009**

**Foreword**

This pamphlet aims to bring out the true facts about the recent developments in West Bengal. It is difficult for people outside the State to comprehend the extent of the politics of violence being practiced against Left cadre and supporters by the combine led by the Trinamul Congress. In the last over three decades of Left front Government in West Bengal, the state has been more or less free of the kind of vandalism and violence we are witnessing today. The facts in this pamphlet provide details of and the context of the present violence.

There is a virtual blackout in the media, with a few honourable exceptions, of reports of the brutality of the violence and the extent of it. It would seem that sections of the media have taken on the role of an opposition party in West Bengal with not even a fig leaf of impartiality. This is not a new development. However, the vitriol and the range of personalised attacks certainly provide a new low in the record of media reporting.

The most recent examples are the misleading reports on Lalgarh and its developments. It is being reported as if the entire adivasi community has been alienated from the CPI (M). However, the fact remains that in spite of the concerted efforts of the TMC alliance with its overt and covert contact and work with the Maoists in the area, in the Lok Sabha elections, the CPI (M) candidate Comrade Pulin Baskey won the ST reserved seat by around 3 lakh votes. The Binpur Assembly constituency, under which Lalgarh falls, was won by the Jharkhand Party in the last assembly election. In the Lok Sabha elections however, the Left Front candidate won a majority in the Binpur Assembly segment.

Lalgarh is a Gram Panchayat within the Binpur block in West Midnapur district. There are nine GPs in the same block. Binpur Assembly constituency is composed of the GPs of

Binpur I and II. Details of how the situation in Lalgah developed following the failed attempt by the Maoists to kill Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya on November 2, 2008 are given in this pamphlet. The links of the TMC chieftain with the Maoists have been exposed in the statements given by Maoist leaders themselves. These too are detailed in this pamphlet.

Just before the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections were announced, the TMC supremo herself went to express her solidarity with the pro-Maoist committee (Peoples Committee against Police Atrocities) formed in the area under the leadership of a former Trinamul Congress leader Chhatradhar Mahato. She shared the same platform to address the people in the presence of the leadership of the PCAPA. No other political party was allowed to visit the area, which had been blockaded by the committee. However, while Left party leaders were being targeted and sought to be killed, she along with other TMC leaders could go there without any security! Today when she disclaims any contact with these groups does it have any credibility?

It is also now clear as daylight that the TMC is playing the main role in creating chaos and disorder along with the other right-wing political parties as well as the left extremist political outfits. This fact has been corroborated by one of the topmost leader of the CPI (Maoist), Koteswara Rao (Kishanji), through a TV interview. He confirmed that they helped the TMC to drive out the CPI(M) from Nandigram and adjacent areas. In return, he wanted the TMC leader who was now a Union Minister to come forward and help them to do same in Lalgah. These details are also brought out in this pamphlet.

It must be underlined that contrary to the claims made by a section of pro-Maoist intellectuals that they are revolutionaries, these self-styled Maoists have nothing in common with the work and practice of the great revolutionary Mao-Tse Tung. During the lifetime and after the demise of comrade Mao, the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) never used the term 'Maoism,' to denote a theory. Rather, in the literature of the CPC and in the documents of their Party Congress's, the CPC has said that it follows Marxism-Leninism and Mao-ze Dong Thought.

It is evident through the interpretation of the CPC how comrade Mao applied Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions obtaining in China basing on its special characteristics. This is known as Mao-ze Dong thought. Those who are using the term 'Maoism,' are completely disregarding and dishonouring the vast revolutionary activities of Comrade Mao. These self-styled Maoists have degenerated into armed groups and have no qualms in killing poor people who dare oppose their extortionist terror.

This pamphlet contains two articles published in The Hindu written by senior journalist Shri Praveen Swami, which give details about the situation in Lalgarh.

Women have been particularly affected in the ongoing violence. A report of the West Bengal Women's Commission of their recent investigation into incidents of violence and the impact on women is also included in the this pamphlet.

All Party units throughout the country are campaigning in solidarity with the Left movement in West Bengal and to protest the attacks on the CPIM) and Left cadre and supporters. We have to expose the true nature of the activities of the CPI (Maoist) and their wrong politics and actions in Lalgarh and elsewhere. We have to also expose the politics of violence of the TMC led combine and its links with the Maoists. I believe this pamphlet will contribute to strengthening this effort.

**Biman Basu**  
**Member, Polit Bureau**  
**Secretary, West Bengal State Committee**

## **Introduction**

Following the electoral setback in West Bengal, the anti-communist forces have started an intensified assault including terror and violence against communist cadre and supporters in West Bengal. As many as 62 comrades have been killed in the last five months (between March 3 and July 21, 2009). Most of these comrades belong to poor families. Many of them belong to the minority community, to scheduled tribes and scheduled caste communities.

The attacks must be seen in the context of the crucial role that the Left movement in West Bengal has played in enhancing the role of pro-people interventions at the national level both in terms of alternative policies to the neo-liberal dominant agenda as well as through mass mobilizations for struggle. This role was further highlighted during the last five years when in 2004, the people of West Bengal elected a record 35 Members of Parliament of the Left Front out of 42. Along with the Left Front MPs from other states, these increased numbers of MPs provided a strong block within Parliament to fight for the rights of the working people, to defend the sovereignty of the country and to concretely propose alternatives. However the intervention of the Left at the national level on issues of policy was strongly opposed by entrenched corporate interests as well as foreign interests particularly from within the US establishment. The differences between the Left on the one hand and the UPA Government on the other intensified on the Indo-US nuclear deal issue which was the centre piece of the desired strategic relationship with the US. The role of the US representatives in India are well known. They went so far as to have discussions with the opposition mahajot in Bengal. Apart from the nuclear deal there were other issues such as the Left blocking the Foreign providers Bill in the education sector which was of great interest to the US lobby or the blocking of FDI in retail affecting the big US company, Walmart. Further, it was the Left parties which prevented the sell-out of the banking sector to foreign interests; that prevented the increase of foreign capital in LIC; that blocked the privatisation of pension funds; stopped the untrammelled disinvestments in the public sector, to name a few of the important Left interventions

which protected the interests of the people and of the national economy but which at the same time hurt the interests of the corporates, foreign and Indian. Thus the focus of these vested interests was to ensure the defeat of the Left in West Bengal so as also to weaken the interventions of the Left parties at the national level.

Soon after the elections the first demand made by the Trinamul Congress chief was the dismissal of the Left Front Government on grounds of a so-called breakdown of law and order. In fact it is her party and its allies who are trying to deliberately create a situation to destabilize the Government. Even before the elections it was seen how the TMC led reactionary combine including a range of foreign funded NGOs, did not have a word to say against the divisive and sectarian ethnic mobilizations in North Bengal whether in the name of Gorkhaland , Greater Coochbehar etc. The BJP openly supported the divisive forces in North Bengal. Its leader Jaswant Singh won the Darjeeling seat standing on the shoulders of the Gorkhaland Janmukti Morcha, an outfit which has openly adopted a divisive platform to cause ethnic tensions in the area. The Congress party formally opposed the formation of Gorkhaland and spoke against ethnic divisions, but did not mobilize any section of the people against these divisive forces. On the contrary, it maintained its alliance in the area with the TMC which continues to maintain its direct and indirect links with all these forces. A similar opportunist position was taken by the TMC combine on the demand for the inclusion of the three districts Purulia, Bankura and West Midnapur in the State of Jharkhand.

This coming together of the anti-Left forces in West Bengal and in particular against the CPI(M) has been an ongoing project over the years but it took on an urgency during the last five years. The gang-up from the extreme right to the extreme Left on issues raised by the opposition parties in Nandigram and Singur are well known. Opposition to policies of any Government including in West Bengal by parties or organizations is an intrinsic right of every citizen and political formation. However when such opposition takes the form of violent killing, vandalism, burning of peoples homes, of party offices, of creating terror like conditions it becomes obvious that the aim is to physically annihilate communists and their supporters in the name of "peoples movement". The CPI(M) has accepted the 2009 electoral

verdict of the people with humility and in a spirit of improving and redressing its own weaknesses at various level. But the physical attacks on Party cadre go beyond Party interests to a defence of democracy and democratic rights which concern all citizens.

### **Increased Attacks**

Since the results of the Lok Sabha elections attacks are continuing on a daily basis in different areas. In Khejuri in East Midnapore and Lalgarh in West Midnapore, CPI (M) activists have been physically attacked and murdered, Party offices burnt down and hundreds of CPI (M) supporters forcibly driven out of villages, by organized and armed gangs led by the Trinamul Congress and Maoists. Targeted assassinations of CPI (M) leaders have also taken place in the districts of Bardhaman, Birbhum, Purulia and Howrah. In Murshidabad, Congress has led the series of attacks against the CPI(M). This planned and organised violence has been continuing right from the time the Lok Sabha polls were announced. This has intensified after the results.

A significant feature of this spate of attacks against the CPI (M) in Bengal is the open nexus between the Maoists and mainstream opposition parties, particularly the Trinamul Congress. The so-called Maoists in India, who have refused to abandon the path of individual assassination and mindless acts of terror, have since long degenerated into armed gangs, indulging in nefarious activities like extortion, robbery and money laundering. Like criminal gangs, who forge links with political parties for patronage and protection, the Maoists too have developed links with mainstream politicians in states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh. In these states, the involvement of the Maoists in election related violence has not been limited to their enforcement of poll boycott calls. They have been often found involved in threatening or even killing candidates of one political party on behalf of another, and also indulging in booth capturing. In West Bengal, they have discovered a willing ally in the Trinamul Congress.

### **NANDIGRAM: TMC-MAOISTS GANG UP**

While the links between the Trinamul Congress and the Maoists in West Bengal have surfaced during various

incidents of violence since the early years of this decade, the Nandigram episode in 2007 had brought this nexus out in the open. Intelligence reports as well as some reports in the media had pointed towards the active involvement of Maoists in Nandigram and the matter was raised in parliament by CPI (M) MPs. However, this was vehemently denied by all the opposition political parties like the Trinamul Congress, Congress and the BJP, who were a part of the BUPC (Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee) in Nandigram and the mahajot in the panchayat elections in 2008. The recent interview by Maoist leader Koteswar Rao (Kishanji) on TV channels and to newspapers has put all speculations to rest. He has not only confirmed the active participation of the Maoists in the Nandigram violence but has also stated that the Trinamul Congress had supplied them with ammunitions. This corroborates the admissions of Himadri Sen Roy (Somen), the West Bengal State Secretary of the CPI (Maoists), who was arrested by the police in February 2008.

On the basis of his interrogation report prepared by the CID, the newspapers reported:

- ❖ “CPI (Maoist) leaders, including Somen, visited Nandigram in December 2006 to ‘assess the temperament of locals’ when protests against land acquisition for a chemical hub just began.
- ❖ Based on the visit, a meeting of his party was held in Chakulia forest in Jharkhand in February 2007 to devise a strategy for Nandigram. A decision was taken to keep the Maoists away from the forefront of agitation due to lack of organisational network in Nandigram. It was also decided to procure arms. Accordingly, the party central committee sanctioned Rs 8 lakh, by which six .315 rifles and 500 bullets worth Rs 4 lakh were purchased from one Sahoo based in Jharkhand.
- ❖ The consignment was received at Haldia, shipped to Nandigram and kept at the house of CPI (Maoist) East Midnapore zonal committee secretary Narayan's residence in Sonachura, the epicentre of Nandigram movement. Besides, 30 crude guns were procured locally. Narayan also acted as a link with the BUPC, whose members Karabi, Ranjit Pal and Dipak formed the Maoist squad along with Narayan. [Maoist cadre Ranjit Pal was involved in the assassination of JMM MP Sunil Mahato in Jharkhand in March 2007]

- ❖ Somen also visited Nandigram in July 2007 for two days and stayed at Narayan's residence.
- ❖ Narayan was in contact with Trinamool MP from Tamaluk Subendhu Adhikari, the then MLA from Contai South Assembly constituency, and BUPC leaders. Maoists also forged links with Sidiqullah Chowdhury's People's Democratic Council of India (PDCI), SUCI and Bandi Mukti Committee (BMC).
- ❖ Several Bengal intellectuals, including BMC president Mahasweta Devi, went to Nandigram at the Maoists' behest to exhort people to join the anti-acquisition movement.
- ❖ Kishanji, also operating under the names of Pradip, Bimal, Prahalad and Sridhar, collected "levy" from contractors in Bankura, Purulia and West Midnapore averaging Rs 8 lakh per month. He also received Rs 1.3-1.5 lakh from the central party headquarters every month, which he distributed directly to the state unit. He wrote press statements of the party in English while Somen framed the Bengali ones."

It is clear that the violent blockade of Nandigram, which continued till November 2007, had little to do with the protest against land acquisition for the chemical hub. The State Government had explicitly abandoned the land acquisition proposal in February 2007 itself. The protest against land acquisition became a convenient cover for legitimizing the gang up with the Maoists and unleashing open terror against the CPI (M).

Unfortunately, a powerful section of the media in West Bengal also played a very important role in helping the cover-up and the violent activities of the opposition in Bengal. Day after day biased reports were shown on some TV channels and reported in papers to shape public opinion. Indeed the role of this section of the media shows the extent of how news can be manipulated to suit the interests of corporate houses foreign and Indian.

### **LALGARH: UNHOLY POLITICAL NEXUS**

Several attempts were made by the Trinamul Congress and the Maoists to create similar situations elsewhere in West Bengal and launch a combined attack against the CPI (M).



On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2008, an attempt was made by the Maoists to assassinate the West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, when he was returning from Salboni in West Midnapore along with the Union Steel Minister after laying the foundation stone of a steel plant. The landmine exploded by the Maoists missed the Chief Minister's convoy narrowly. The police launched operations to arrest the culprits and some suspects were arrested. In the process, however, the police indulged in some unjustifiable repressive measures in the Chotopelia village in Lalgarh, especially against some tribal women, one of whose eye was severely damaged. 11 women lodged formal complaints about police torture. The Trinamool Congress as the main opposition party in West Bengal did not utter a single word of condemnation. On the contrary it helped the pro-Maoist forces in the affected area.

A Committee against Police Atrocities (PSBJC), which included all anti-Left parties and groups active in the area, was formed soon, which demanded the treatment and compensation for the injured tribal women, action against the guilty police officials, release of the arrested suspects and public apology by the District Superintendent of Police of West Midnapore and other policemen by holding their ears and crawling with their nose to the ground. The entire area was blockaded by digging up roads and felling trees, similar to Nandigram, and made out of bounds for the police and the administration. The Bharat Jakat Majhi Marwa (BJMM) a platform of traditional adivasi leaders agreed to a dialogue with the administration. The administration accepted most of the demands and provided treatment and compensation for the injured women; released eight of the accused including three school going boys; and the SP and the Inspector in Charge of Lalgarh police station were transferred. The BJMM then agreed to lift the blockade but were prevented from doing so by the pro-Maoist PSBJC. The injured women were also prevented from accepting the compensation. The PSBJC continued with the blockade. The BJMM held a huge rally of adivasis on December 9 to put forward their understanding. Within 48 hours the leader of the BJMM was shot dead by the Maoists. This is how the terrorist squads of the Maoists acted to create a situation where only the anti-Left pro-Maoist PSBJC should operate. The blockade of Lalgarh, which started in November 2008 continued till June 2009, till the State Government

recently launched a combined operation of the state police and the central security forces.

The objective of the blockade went beyond securing justice for those who had suffered due to police excesses but was actually meant to shield the Maoists, who were behind the assassination attempt on the Chief Minister. This became clear when Maoist cadre Shashadhar Mahato (Bikash), the prime suspect behind the assassination attempt, appeared before the media within the "liberated zone" of Lalgarh on 16<sup>th</sup> June with an AK 47 slung on his shoulders. Bikash said on TV: "On November 2, our plan was to execute Buddhadeb. If people want Buddhadeb hanged, who will hang him? It will be us of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army." He was making these statements with the CPI (M) local committee office in Dharampur burning in the backdrop and the corpse of CPI (M) activist Salku Soren, who was killed two days back by the Maoists, lying beside it. The PSBJC Convenor Chatradhar Mahato, a contractor by profession, is the brother of this Maoist Bikash. In an interview to NDTV on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, Chatradhar Mahato stated that he has been an activist of the Trinamul Congress and actively campaigned for it during the Panchayat elections in 2008. He also admitted in a roundabout manner that his brother is a Maoist.

The Lalgarh episode has once again brought to the fore the nexus between the Trinamul Congress and the Maoists. Mamata Banerjee herself has provided active support to the Lalgarh blockade throughout and even addressed a rally of the PSBJC in Lalgarh on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009, sharing the dais with Chatradhar Mahato. As the security forces' operation in Lalgarh began, the double standards of Trinamul Congress and Mamata Banerjee got badly exposed:

**17<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**Partha Chatterjee, Trinamul MLA and leader of Opposition in WB Assembly:** "If the Maoists are unleashing terror, then why is the CPI(M) not asking the government to ban the organisation. The 'Maoist drama' has the support of the chief minister." (**Asian Age**)

**18<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**Maoist leader Kishanji:** "People will block the roads, the armed forces that come will be taught a lesson, the central govt., the Buddhadeb govt. will be taught a lesson...We are asking Mamata too, she was with us in Nandigram...now we want to know what stand she will take. She is now in the cabinet, the sole member from her party... The tribals here are sitting in protest against the Paramilitary forces, ready to fight them. Which side will Mamata support is what we want to know." (NDTV)

**20<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**Mamata Banerjee:** "If statements by Biman Bose and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee linking our party with Maoists are not withdrawn within 48 hours, we will agitate to demand sacking of the government by the Centre. We don't believe in individual killings and don't have link with Maoists. We have been demanding a ban on Maoists in the state...He himself (Buddhadeb Bhattacharya) had said once that he is fond of Maoist books and literature and has them at his residence." (Outlook)

**Kishanji:** "She is playing a political game. Even though she is a member of the Central Cabinet, she has not said a single word against sending Central forces to Lalgarh. Now, to gain sympathy in West Bengal, she is saying that the police and the CPI(M) unleashed a reign of terror in Junglemahal. This is clearly a case of double standards on her part. The mask has fallen from her face...After the Lalgarh movement started, Mamata Banerjee visited Lalgarh. The locals allowed her to visit this place. But now she will not be able to come to Lalgarh or any parts of Junglemahal. We have also decided that we will prevent her from entering Nandigram and Singur, where we were part of the movement." (Asian Age)

**22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009**

**Kishanji:** "Mamata's real interest is to grab power in West Bengal. Had she been sincere, she would have stepped down from the Union cabinet because the Centre has joined hands with the state government to unleash a reign of terror in Lalgarh" (India Today)

**29<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

**Mamata Banerjee:** "I am once again urging the central government not to provide support to the CPI-M at Lalgarh and use central forces to unearth illegal arms stocked by the party...I urge the Centre to immediately convene an emergency meeting to be attended by Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Home Minister P Chidambaram to review what actually is happening at Lalgarh in the name of flushing out Maoists." (**Hindustan Times**)

**1<sup>st</sup> July 5, 2009**

**Mamata Banerjee:** "What is going on at Lalgarh is a total drama. There are no Maoist activists in the region. If there had been any ultra-Left activists, they have by now already fled the area and the Left Front government has allowed them to flee. Now in the name of running joint operations against the Maoists, the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee government is just trying to regain its political base..." (**Economic Times**)

## **CONCLUSION**

Scores of CPI (M) activists have been killed in Lalgarh since November 2008. Among them were Salku Soren, an agricultural worker and Abhijit Mahato, a 22 year old student and SFI activist. Over 74 CPI (M) activists and supporters have been killed by the Maoists in the West Midnapore district alone since 2003, out of which around 50 were poor peasants and agricultural workers. Victims of Maoist violence also include doctors, nurses, tribal activists of other political parties, poll officials and police personnel. The Maoists have been able to continue with this murderous spree because of the support they are receiving from the mainstream political parties like the Trinamul Congress and a pliant media. While the combined operation of the security forces has forced the Maoists to flee from Lalgarh into the jungles bordering Bengal and Jharkhand, they will surely try to make a comeback at the earliest opportunity. Trinamul Congress' efforts to stall the operations of the security forces is nothing but an attempt to help the Maoists. Besides the appropriate administrative steps, it is also necessary to expose and politically isolate these anti-democratic forces.

This concerted attack on the Party and the politics of violence practiced by the opponents of the CPI(M) and the Left in West Bengal has to be roundly defeated. A campaign in solidarity with the West Bengal unit of the Party is being conducted throughout the country. Left, progressive and democratic minded people throughout the country have to be mobilised in large numbers against this nefarious game and the cult of violence. The entire party has to gear up to meet this challenge and to defeat the politics of violence.

### **The Martyrs**

The targeting of CPI(M) cadres and their families, most of whom belong to poor families are often accompanied by naked brutality.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2009** – In Madarpur under Naihati P.S. of North 24 Pargana district, *Comrade Tapas Mondal* was brutally murdered by Trinamool Congress goons. He was the night guard of the Madarpur high school.
- **11<sup>th</sup> March, 2009** – In Bankura's Joypur, CPI (M)'s zonal committee member *Comrade Sayed Ali Bhuiyan* was returning home. At around 9.00 p.m. at Sarnakarpara, Trinamool activists shot him from point blank range. The bullet pierced Comrade Bhuiyan's head killing him on the spot.
- **14<sup>th</sup> March, 2009** – In East Midnapur's Saudkhali, CPI (M) supporter *Comrade Subol Kajli* was kidnapped on 7<sup>th</sup> March by local Trinamool supporters. A week later, his decomposed body was recovered from the Haldi river.
- **17<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**- In East Midnapur's Khejuri block no. 2, CPI (M) supporter *Comrade Himadri Patra* was cold bloodedly murdered. His body was recovered from a local canal in Sundarpur.
- **17<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**- In South Dinajpur's Nandanpur village panchayat area the poor villagers cultivate fish in a local pond to earn their livelihood. The local Trinamul leaders who boast of their pro-people attitude, wanted to acquire the pond for their own benefit. When CPI(M) supporter *Comrade Ansar Ali* resisted, he was dragged out of his home and hit with a sickle on his head. He died on the way to the hospital.

**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2009 - 5 comrades were killed in different districts**

- In Murshidabad's Berhampore, Congress' goons brutally murdered CPI(M)'s local committee secretary Comrade Gopal Mandal. He was surrounded in Krishnamati's Deshbandhu Seva Samity ground and was shot at in broad daylight.  
When he fell, the perverts bombed his blood drenched body.
- In Burdwan's Jhijalna, a peaceful CPI(M) rally was attacked by armed Trinamul supporters. The brutality of the attack can be estimated from the fact that a CPI(M) supporter, *Comrade Sohrab Dewan* was killed on spot.
  - At West Midnapur's Belapahari, in front of the Bhulabheda panchayat office, the Maoists shot dead two CPI(M) supporters; local committee member *Comrade Durga Deshowali* and supporter *Comrade Santosh Mahato* -- both lived in Amadubi village and were poor farmers.
- In 24-Pargana's Titagarh, a bomb was hurled at DYFI leader *Comrade Bijoy Shau* who died on spot.

**28<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**

- In Purulia *Comrade Kanai Kumar* was killed and his body was cut to pieces while he was returning from the local market, Arshar Kantadi Hat, by anti socials sheltered by the Congress.
- In Srikantapur of Shimulia village panchayat of East Midnapur, CPI(M) supporter *Comrade Ganesh Das* was lynched to death by Trinomool supporters.
- **10<sup>th</sup> April, 2009** - In West Midnapur's Belapahari the Maoists brutally killed 45 year old CPI(M) worker *Comrade Asim Mondal*, he had recently taken a loan to open a small shop in the area with a dream to enhance his livelihood.
- **21<sup>st</sup> April, 2009**  
In West Midnapur's Nadaria, the Maoists and PCPA supporters killed *Comrade Hambir Mandi*. He was an agricultural laborer. His only crime was that he was a supporter of the CPI(M).  
On the same day CPI(M)'s Nadaria branch committee member *Comrade Sakti Sen*, who was a poor farmer by profession was also killed by the so-called 'People's Committee'.

- **22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2009** - In West Midnapur's Lalgarh the Maoists and Trinamul Congress openly attacked 10 CPI(M) workers with fire arms. They also warned the villagers against taking the injured to hospital. Let alone medical aid, *Comrade Gopinath Murmu* died, denied even a drop of water.

**23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2009**

- In South 24- Pargana's Atapur village which is under Manipur village panchayat *Comrade Nikhil Das* was murdered. His body was recovered from a local canal.
- In Purulia's Supurdi village Maoists bike brigade killed two CPI(M) leaders; *Comrade Baikuntha Mahato* and CPI(M)'s Danrda zonal committee secretary *Comrade Bibhuti Singh Sardar* at point blank range.
- **27<sup>th</sup> April, 2009** - In Hooghly's Kinkarbati village Trinamool supporters killed CPI(M)'s Local Committee(2) member *Comrade Bhaben Dhig*.

**7<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**

- In Chandrapur, Howrah, in front of the Mahisguha primary school, Trinamool workers shot dead CPI(M) worker *Comrade Manoyar Ali Jamadar*. *Comrade Ali* laid his life because like a responsible citizen he dared to raise his voice against Trinamool's rigging, booth capturing and terrorism in his area in the general elections.
- In Murshidabad's Atghari, CPI(M) supporter *Comrade Kashinath Mondal* was bombed while he was returning home after casting his vote.
- **8<sup>th</sup> May, 2009** -- After the general elections in Howrah, Trinamool's atrocities and torture has intensified. Trinamul goondas have unleashed violence in Bagnan, Amta's Chandrapur, Deorapara, Purbapara, Udaynarayanpur's South Malikpara Ramchawk. In Bagnan *Comrade Seikh Saidul*, in Chilampur, a young student of class 10 *Seikh Babua* and in Malikpara *Comrade Chandu Dului* were killed. Of these young Babua was bombed.
- **9<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- In East Midnapur's Jadubarichawk, two CPI (M) workers were kidnapped and were lynched to death. They were *Comrade Sheikh Abdullah* & *Comrade Sheikh Aksar*.
- **10<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- In East Midnapur *Comrade Mainuddin Khan* was kidnapped by local Trinamool activists. Two days later his body was recovered from river Haldi.

- **11<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- In Purulia's Jhalda, Congress goons brutally murdered Forward Bloc worker *Comrade Bhandulal Mura*.
- **13<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- South 24 Parganas Nabhasan village is under the Canning West assembly. Trinamool & SUCI activists first hurled a bomb at *Comrade Joynal Molla* and then chopped him to death with an axe.
- **15<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- In Purulia's Kuilapal, Maoists and TMC men opened fire in a narrow, crowded market and killed CPI(M)'s local committee member *Comrade Manu Singh*.
- **16<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- In Murshidabad's Charbathan, *Comrade Mantaj Seikh* was killed.
- **17<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- In Malda's Chari Anantapur Congress activists killed Forward Bloc activist *Comrade Arbindo Mondal*.
- **19<sup>th</sup> May, 2009**- In Coochbehar's Bherbheri Manabari village SFI activist *Comrade Bibek Barman* was brutally murdered.
- **22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2009** - In Malda's Ratua, Congress supporters attacked *Comrade Kartik Mahalder*. He was admitted to Kolkata's SSKM hospital in a critical condition where he breathed his last.
- **23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2009** -- In Purulia's Kedula, CPI(M) local committee member *Comrade Dinesh Mahato* was killed by Maoists.
- **23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2009** - In South 24 Parganas district's Bishnupur, CPI(M) worker *Comrade Monoranjan Nasur* was killed by Trinamool Congress goons.
- **25<sup>th</sup> May, 2009** - In Purba Medinipur district's Nandigram, a CPI(M) worker, a poor rickshaw puller *Comrade Santosh Barman* was killed by the Trinamool Congress.
- **28<sup>th</sup> May, 2009** - In Nadia district at Krishnanagar CPI(M) worker *Comrade Apurba Ghosh* was killed by congressmen.
- **30<sup>th</sup> May, 2009** - In North 24 Parganas in Deaar village under Barasat, CPI(M) worker *Comrade Saidul Islam* was brutally murdered.
- **31<sup>st</sup> May, 2009** - In Birbhum's Rampurhat, Congress backed goons killed *Comrade Narunuddin Seikh*. He was admitted to Siuri hospital where he died.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2009** - In North 24 Parganas Haroa, Krishak Sabha leader *Comrade Khalek Molla* was attacked while returning home by around 20 Trinamool supporters and



hit on the head with a rod. As Comrade Molla fell, a bomb was hurled at him. In critical condition he was admitted to the Chittaranjan hospital where he died later.

- **5<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In East Midnapur's Panskura, Trinamool Congress members attacked CPI(M) leader and school teacher *Comrade Gobindo Samanto* with lathis and broke his hands and legs. He was admitted to Sambhunath pandit hospital where he died.
- **6<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In South Dinajpur's Sukdebpur, CPI(M) worker *Comrade Dinesh Debsingha* was killed.

#### **8<sup>th</sup> June, 2009**

- At Howrah's Keranichawk Krishak Sabha member *Comrade Kinkar Dului* was kidnapped from his house and killed. His body was recovered from a nearby pond.
- In West Midnapur's Lalgarh -- CPI(M) activist *Comrade Salku Soren* was brutally murdered by Trinamool backed goons in the jungles of Ajanashuri. Comrade Soren was a poor farmer, his only crime was that he was a member of Madhyakumari branch committee of the CPI(M).
- **11<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In Murshidabad's Namu Nadaypur, CPI(M) worker *Comrade Setabur Seikh* was brutally killed with a chopper.
- **12<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In Murshidabad's Berhampore, in broad daylight CPI(M)'s Nimtala local committee member *Comrade Ekramul Haq* was murdered. He was shot dead in front of the gates of Sericultural office by Congress goons.
- **14<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In west Midnapur's Dharampur, Maoists with modern fire arms terrorized the entire village and murdered Hariganj CPI(M) branch secretary *Comrade Ashit Samanta*, *Comrade Naru Samanta* and *Comrade Prabir Mahato*, a DYFI activist. All three were small peasants. On the same day TMC goons killed another poor farmer & CPI(M) supporter in Khejuri, *Comrade Pabitra Das*.
- **15<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In Gaurdanga, Burdwan, TMC bike brigade shot dead CPI(M)'s Bardhaman district committee member & district Electricity Board's Treasurer *Comrade Falguni Mukherjee*.
- **17<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In West Midnapur's Jhargram, near National Highway 6, Maoists shot dead CPI(M)'s Bankishol branch secretary, *Comrade Anil Mahato*, SFI's 20 year old zonal committee member, *Comrade Avijit Mahato* and DYFI leader *Comrade Niladri Mahato* while

*the trio were having tea at a local tea stall. Avijit was due to appear for his B.A exams the next day.*

- **18<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - CPI(M)'s Pingboni local committee member *Comrade Badal Ahir* was killed by Maoists. He was a primary school teacher. On the same day the Maoists killed three poor adivasis who were against Maoist atrocities. They were *Durraj Soren, Dasharat Soren* and *Chaitanya Soren*.
- **20<sup>th</sup> June, 2009** - In East Midnapur's Satengabari, TMC supporters lynched CPI(M) supporter *Comrade Keshab Das*. He was admitted to the hospital where he died.
- **21<sup>st</sup> June, 2009** - In East Midnapur's Goramahol, TMC activists attacked CPI(M) supporter *Comrade Ajoy Raut*. He breathed his last the next day in a hospital.
- **10th July, 2009** - In a hamlet in Shirshi Village of Dherua GP area of Binpur 1 Block in West Medinipore district Maoists slit the throats of CPI(M) activist, **Gurucharan Mahato** and a ration shop dealer **Baren Mahato**. They were left to die beside a pond in the village.
- **15th July, 2009** - In Purulia's Beldhi, Secretary of the Tumrashol Local committee, *Comrade Gangadhar Mahato*, a worker of the Belladi Appatide Mines was waylaid on the the way to the Local committee office of the Party. 6-7 Maoists intercepted him at the Kukurchari intersection and shot him from point blank range killing him on the spot.

#### **18th July, 2009 -**

- In Jhargram, East Midnapur, CPI(M) Zonal committee member and AIKS Jhargram Block committee president, *Comrade Jaladhar Mahato* was killed by suspected Maoists. Four motorcycle borne assailants encircled *Comrade Mahato* near Keudishol forests and fired at him from point blank range killing him instantly.
- In Goaltore's, Baranagdona village in West Medinipore district Party activist *Comrade Ashok Ghosh* was killed inside his small grocery shop by four Maoists who came on motorcycles and shot at him from point blank range.
- In Tatari village under Puncha police station area of Purulia district, armed miscreants forcibly entered *Comrade Brihaspati Mahato's* house and killed him by inflicting injuries on his body with sharp weapons.

- **22nd July, 2009** - In Belpahahari's (Binpur Bloc 2), Rangameta Madhupur in Paschim Midnapur, Maoists gunned down CPI(M) Branch Committee member, *Fagu Baskey*. Comrade Fagu Baskey was a poor farmer. He was waylaid by 4-5 motorcycle borne assailants while on his way to his field.

Of the total of 66 people killed, 62 belonged to the CPI(M), 2 to AIFB and 2 were villagers.

**July 3, 2009 - The Hindu**

**Lalgarh: fear, power and obedience**

Praveen Swami

*Can democratic institutions resist a cult of death?*

Four years ago, in a newspaper interview that went unnoticed even in West Bengal, 'Comrade Dhruba' described plans for a guerrilla campaign that would stretch from Medinipur to Malda. But the Communist Party of India (Maoist) central committee member had words of reassurance for his impeccably bourgeois, English-speaking audience. "We do not plan violence in Kolkata," he said, "because when we establish our bases there, the people will be forced to obey us."

Marketed as an authentic adivasi rebellion against misrule, backwardness and human rights abuses, the still-unfolding violence in Lalgarh in fact provides graphic insights into exactly how India's Maoists command obedience. Lalgarh's key leaders – a caste-Hindu from Andhra Pradesh with a Kalashnikov in hand, and an affluent public-works contractor backed by the Trinamool Congress – have demonstrated that there is an intimate relationship between fear and power.

Fittingly, perhaps, the Lalgarh crisis began with a murderous act of violence – albeit an abortive one. Minutes after West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee left the site of a new steel plant on November 2, 2008, a massive improvised explosive device went off under the road he had just passed over. If rats in the fields around Salboni hadn't chewed through the kilometre-long wire connecting the IED to the hands which controlled the explosion, Mr. Bhattacharjee would have died.

For months before the bombing, there had been localised protests against the construction of the Rs. 350 billion JSW-Bengal Steel plant at Salboni. No large-scale displacement of local residents was involved. Of the 5,000 acres needed to build the plant, 4,500 acres were owned by the State government, while the remaining 500 were purchased by the JSW-Bengal Steel at relatively high prices. But Maoist-affiliated groups argued that the State had no right to the forest land it was making over to the

plant: it belonged, they insisted, to the region's adivasis.

The police responded to the November 2 bombing by detaining over a dozen Lalgarh area residents for questioning – a far from unusual practice after a major terrorist attack. Many of those detained, predictably, had no connection with terrorists. On November 3, for example, the police held retired schoolteacher Kshmananda Mahato and three teenage school students, Eben Muru, Goutam Patra and Buddhadev Patra. Even though all four were let off the next day, some local residents were incensed.

### Clash between police and locals

Matters came to a head on November 5. Early that morning, the police raided the village of Chhoto Pelia in search of Sasadhar Mahato – the fugitive CPI (Maoist) operative alleged to have commanded the attempted assassination of the Chief Minister. Fighting broke out between them and the local residents who the police claim were compelled by the Maoists present in the village to obstruct their way. Fourteen women were injured; one woman, Chhitmani Murmu, lost an eye.

From November 7, the anger transformed into street protests. Led by the Bharat Jakat Majhi Marwa (BJMM), a body of traditional adivasi community leaders, Salboni residents closed roads and blockaded the Lalgarh police station. On November 14, though, the BJMM leadership reached an agreement with the local authorities. But its workers were now attacked by members of the newly-formed Police Santrosh Birodhi Janasadharaner Committee (People's Committee Against Police Atrocities: PSBJC), which accused the traditional adivasi leadership of selling out the people it represented.

Who constituted the PSBJC? Its principal leader, Chattradhar Mahato, was a long-standing Trinamool Congress supporter who had made a small fortune from public-works contracts – and fugitive Maoist Sasadhar Mahato's brother. Trinamool leaders claim he was expelled two years ago, but have produced no evidence to back this claim. Notably, Trinamool Congress flags were regularly flown by the PSBJC cadre at their protests; at many places in Lalgarh, the

party's banners still share space with those of the CPI (Maoist).

From the outset, it was clear that the PSBJC had no intention of making peace. Its demands were designed to invite rejection: that West Medinipur's Superintendent of Police do penance by performing "sit-ups holding his ears;" that all policemen in Lalgarh crawl on all fours from Dalilpur to Chhoto Pelia, rubbing their noses in the dirt; that all those arrested on terrorism-related charges since 1998 be released.

Even then, the State government attempted to stave off a confrontation. On November 27, the day of the deadline set by the PSBJC, the West Bengal police shut down 13 posts and camps in the Lalgarh area. Later, on December 1, two more police posts were abandoned. But West Bengal's increasingly desperate efforts to make peace failed – and a murderous meltdown followed.

The PSBJC announced the suspension of its struggle – but on ground, formed a parallel administration. Its Maoist allies prevented the entry of the police and administration in the villages of Belpahari, Binpur, Lalgarh, Jamboni, Salboni and Goaltore. From here, the Maoist death squads launched a series of increasingly brutal attacks. BJMM's Sudhir Mandal, who organised a massive anti-Maoist rally in December, was shot dead. In February 2009, Maoists fired on the funeral procession of the assassinated Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader, Nandalal Pal, killing three. Five more CPI(M) supporters were killed in April, as were four poll staff and police personnel. June brought a fresh wave of attacks.

"The Maoists did not capture Lalgarh," counter-terrorism analyst Ajai Sahni observes, "the State deserted the people."

Maoist groups had long been preparing the ground for just such a situation. In 2005, following the assassination of CPI(M) leaders Raghunath Murmu, Bablu Mudi and Mahendra Mahato, the prestigious *South Asia Intelligence Review* warned of the possibility of a "Naxalbari Redux" – a reference to the Darjeeling district hamlet from where, in March 1967, began a six-year Maoist insurgency that claimed hundreds of lives.

Documents seized from three CPI (Maoist) leaders, researcher Saji Cherian noted in the article, showed plans to attack or blow up police stations. There were also notebooks with details of how adivasis in Bankura, Purulia and West Medinipur were to be educated about their exploitation – and how they could be “freed.”

Starting with an October 14, 2004, attack which claimed the lives of six Eastern Frontier Rifles personnel in West Medinipur district, the CPI (Maoist) launched increasingly ferocious attacks.

### Political allies

It also made political allies. In February last year, the West Bengal police arrested Himadri Sen-Roy, the Bengal state secretary of the CPI (Maoist). From Roy’s interrogation, the police acquired a mass of details on how the Maoists were developing a symbiotic relationship with the Trinamool Congress and the welter of so-called civil society movements that had sprung up to oppose West Bengal’s industrialisation drive.

Top Maoist leaders, Sen-Roy is said to have told the police, visited Nandigram in 2006, soon after the Trinamool Congress and Islamist groups initiated what would turn into a bloody confrontation. They sensed opportunity. Sen-Roy claims to have persuaded a range of political figures that their interests and those of the CPI (Maoist) were similar: among them, Trinamool leader Subendhu Adhikari and eminent writer and activist Mahashweta Devi.

Early in 2007, Sen-Roy is alleged to have said, Maoist military commanders purchased Rs. 8 lakh worth of weapons – six .315-bore rifles and ammunition – to set up an armed unit in Nandigram. Dozens of locally-made weapons were also purchased to arm new cadre. The weapons were stored at Sonachura in East Medinipur, an area which saw some of the worst violence during the Nandigram agitation.

Meanwhile, top CPI (Maoist) commander Molajella Koteswar Rao set about constructing military infrastructure in the Lalgarh area. According to Sen-Roy’s testimony to the police – which, under the law, is not admissible in a court – Rao extorted between Rs. 8 lakh every month from roads, construction and forest-produce contracts operating in the

districts of Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia. In addition, CPI (Maoist) units outside West Bengal pumped in a further Rs. 1.5 lakh a month to train recruits in Jharkhand and Orissa's Mayurbhanj forests.

By 2008, the Intelligence Bureau was reporting Maoist activity in all but one of West Bengal's 18 districts. Three districts – Bankura, West Medinipur and Purulia –were graded among the most affected in the country. Between January and October 2008, 21 fatalities were reported from the districts in 34 Maoist attacks.

Like the Lalgarh violence, these killings did nothing for the poor adivasis in whose name they were executed: but the CPI (Maoist) doesn't seem to care.

In one recent interview, Koteswar Rao candidly admitted that his party was willing to endorse almost any form of violence: "We do not support the way they attacked the Victoria station [sic.]", he said of the Lashkar-e-Taiba jihadists who executed November's carnage in Mumbai, "where most of the victims were Muslims. At the same time, we feel that the Islamic upsurge should not be opposed as it is basically anti-U.S. and anti-imperialist in nature. We, therefore, want it to grow."

West Bengal will be a test of whether democratic institutions prove capable of resisting this cult of death.



26-6-2009 - The Hindu

## **Lalgarh: is it liberated or ruled by fear?**

Praveen Swami

*Is the violence in West Medinipur district really an adivasi uprising?*

*Land reform has given adivasis a high level of freedom and security*

*Poll results in the area showed no resentment against CPI(M)*

LALGARH: Early this month, as police marched into the forests around Lalgarh, the adivasi residents of Salboni were told, by Maoists, to start building barricades.

Insurgents armed with rifles and side-arms watched over the villagers as they felled trees and dug trenches. Not surprisingly, no one disputed their orders.

But on Monday, Bongaram Lohar summoned courage to speak up on behalf of the dozens of local residents who had been press-ganged into the building work. For his defiance, Mr. Lohar was brutally beaten up and forced to flee the village.

Most commentary has cast the violence in Lalgarh as an expression of primal adivasi rage: rage against being denied development and justice. One critic even claimed the Lalgarh region had, for the past three decades, been “untouched by development.”

But Mr. Lohar’s story – and a mass of empirical evidence – give reason to doubt this telling of the story.

### **No development?**

Back in 1977, after the first Left Front government took power in West Bengal, entire villages were freed from the control of jotdars, or landlords, by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) workers.

Data from West Bengal's Department of Land and Land reforms shows that till 2002-03, land measuring 16,280 hectares was redistributed to peasants in the blocks of Jhargram, Binpur and Salboni – the areas now under Maoist assault. "In the Jhargram block village where I conduct research", says Aparajita Bakshi, Senior Research Fellow at the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata, "75 per cent of all households are land reform beneficiaries. Of Scheduled Tribe households, no less than 70 per cent gained agricultural land and 90 per cent gained homestead land as a result of land reform."

Income poverty and deprivation continue to exist throughout the region – but land reform has given adivasis a level of freedom and security their counterparts in the rest of India do not enjoy.

Marketed as the liberation of Lalgah, Maoist rule, in fact, made the life of most adivasis worse. Income from forest produce, on which most local residents are dependent, dried up. Government programmes intended to mitigate hardship collapsed altogether.

"In November," says Bhumidhansola resident Manek Singh, "the Maoists forbade us to enter the forests to cut wood. The Forest Department used to pay us Rs.70 a day for this work. Now, no one even enters this area to purchase the leaf-plates we make. We have been left with nothing."

### Extortion and attacks

Faced with extortion and attacks by Maoists, government staff also fled the area. Lalgah residents told *The Hindu* that the Integrated Child Development Scheme workers were ordered to pay Rs.1,000 each month; school teachers and staff at the Block Development Office said they were compelled to part with twice as much to local Maoists.

Following the assassination of government doctor Honiran Murmu and staff nurse Bharati Majhi in October, the Lalgah area has had almost no access to health care.

### Politics and power

Election data debunks the idea that there is a popular rebellion against the CPI(M) under way in Lalgah.

In the 2006 elections to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, the CPI(M) had won six of the seven Assembly seats which together make up the Jhargram Lok Sabha seat: Garhbeta East, Garhbeta West (SC), Salbani, Nayagram (ST), Gopiballavpur and Jhargram. The CPI(M) has held the Jhargram Lok Sabha seat, of which Lalgarh is a part, ever since 1977.

### Police raids

Last year, the West Bengal Police carried out raids across the Lalgarh area, following a November 2 attempt to assassinate Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. Fighting between police and Maoist supporters broke out during the raids; several people were injured.

Backed by the Maoists, Trinamool Congress leader Chhatradar Mahato – the brother of the principal accused in the November 2 bombing – set up the Police Santras Birodhi Janaganer Committee (PSBJC), or People’s Committee Against Police Atrocities.

The PSBJC activists blocked roads, shut off police access to the area, and attacked CPI(M) workers.

Prior to this year’s Lok Sabha elections, the Maoists even initiated protests insisting that the police not enter the villages of Boro Pelia, Chhoto Pelia, Dalilpur Chowk and Khas Jungle – all areas where they had a substantial armed presence.

Had the PSBJC represented widespread resentment against the CPI(M), it ought to have showed up in this year’s Lok Sabha elections. But Jhargram constituency swam against the anti-CPI(M) tide. The CPI(M) candidate, Pulin Bihar Baske, polled 5,45,231 votes, giving him a respectable lead over the 2,52,886 claimed by the Congress’ Amrit Hansda. Mr. Baske even won in the Binpur Assembly segment, of which Lalgarh is a part.

### Rule of fear

How, then, have the Maoists gained so much influence in Lalgarh? Jharkhand Party candidate Chunibala Hansda had this simple answer for one journalist reporting on the Lok Sabha elections: “People are scared of them”.

Last year, even as the PSBJC was mobilising people against the West Bengal government, the Bharat Jakat Majhi Marwa – an organisation of traditional adivasi community leaders, which is opposed to the CPI(M) – organised a rally to protest Maoist violence. More than 10,000 adivasis gathered in Bhulabheda area of Belpahari on December 9.

Sudhir Mandal, the adivasi leader who organised the rally, was shot dead less than 48 hours later.

**Govt. of West Bengal**  
**Office of the W.B. Commission for Women**  
**10, Rainey Park, Kolkata - 700019**  
**Ph: 2474-5608/2486-5324**  
**Fax: 2486-5609**  
**E-mail: wbcw@vsnl.net**

### **Report on visit to Sholbaga, Howrah on 4.6.2009**

A team from the West Bengal Commission for Women consisting of Chairperson Dr. Malini Bhattacharya, Vice-Chairperson Dr. Roma Das and members Dr. Uma Basu, Smt. Shyamali Chakraborty and Smt. Sarbani Bhattacharya visited the village of Sholbaga in Amta-II Block, Uluberia, Howrah on 4.6.09, after receiving information from some women's organisations that on 17.5.09, in a bout of post-election violence, a group of 300-400 hooligans, allegedly of Trinamool Congress, armed with lathis, choppers and revolvers, attacked the village and destroyed the houses of about seventy families by setting fire to them.

The team first went to the Block office and gathered some preliminary information from SDO Sanjay Basu, BDO Binayak Dutta and also the OC, Jaypur thana. They were told that about thirty five houses belonging to seventy families had been burnt down. Among the affected persons there were at least 70-80 women and about two hundred children. The houses were mostly made of mud, but there were some brick houses as well. 21 quintals of rice and 140 pieces of tarpaulin had been distributed as well as sarees, dhotis and garments for children. Two litres of kerosene per family had been distributed. For the time being, the homeless were being accommodated in the local primary school and the BDO had sent his report to the DM. Four people from the neighbouring village had been arrested. There was a police picket inside the school and a mobile van had been patrolling the area for some days. After a gap. it had started patrolling the area again from the day before our visit. Since the village was surrounded by river on all three sides and the attackers had come from the other side of the river, police had been posted at the ghat to prevent such ingress.

Next, we visited the village and made a tour of the village witnessing the magnitude of destruction. Some houses had been completely destroyed, others partially. Some of the

villagers were staying on the site only with a tarpaulin cover overhead. Others were staying inside the school where a common kitchen had been opened. We met about 60-70 women, including Shashthi Dalui, Seba Dalui, Archana Khan, Suchitra Dalui, Tapati Dalui, Putul Dalui and others, who made statements to us about the attack and the present situation. The attack apparently took place around mid-day and about 300-400 attackers with deadly weapons descended upon them even while they were getting ready to take lunch. Some police constables were said to be present at the time but they were unable to prevent the attack. Some of the women alleged that they have been bribed but the OC said that the suddenness of the incident and the fact that firing might have caused fatalities was the reason for inaction. The women said that they ran helter-skelter and took cover wherever they could with their children. One fully pregnant woman, Suchitra Dalui, was put in hiding among the bushes where she delivered her child on the same day. One child Somu Dalui had burn injuries on his hands sustained while he was running away. An old man Kanai Dalui also showed us how his body was scorched when the culprits threw firebombs. The reservoirs where they kept their paddy for the year, which they earned as daily wagers, had been burnt down and the paddy reduced to ashes. Utensils made of aluminum and stainless steel were thoroughly wrecked in the fire as also tin trunks and suitcases. We also found debris of burnt clothes and books in places. One old man, who was a supporter of Trinamool Congress, told us that his house had also been burnt down by the same attackers. But he was staying in the village with the others. Other two houses, also belonging to Congress supporters, where allegedly the attackers had gathered and received information, were however deserted. The women said that cattle and goats possessed by them had also been looted, apart from cash and some ornaments. Their ration cards, epic cards and birth certificates of the children had been destroyed in the fire. They also said that books possessed by fifty high school students in the village had also been reduced to ashes. Barun Dalui, the Panchayat member from the village, and Sambhunath Das, a job assistant, were being threatened over the mobile and they feared that there may be another attack as soon as the police picket is withdrawn. The women also requested us to see that SHG groups were formed in the village to rehabilitate them. They said that the pregnant and lactating women and the children were getting nutritional supplement from the ICDS Centre but they were

unable to go to school. They gave us a copy of the FIR enlisting the names of the accused.

### **Comments**

While post-election violence is not altogether unheard of in West Bengal, the magnitude of the present incident is quite shocking. The villagers are mostly day labourers with no land of their own. Most of them belonged to the Scheduled Castes. This kind of attack on them has rendered them completely destitute and the loss of whatever property they had will be difficult for them to make up in a long time. It is a matter of concern that people with different political affiliations, living for years together without major law and order problem, should now be in the situation of absolute enmity. We were told that this started from the time of the Panchayat elections and there was rigging and booth-capturing at that time. The presence of deadly weapons is also a matter of concern. A group of people met us near Ajangachi, led by the former MLA. They also raised some allegations of attack. One woman Ruma Dalui said that her house was in Sholbaga-IV but now she has been forced to leave the village with her family. Obviously, she belongs to the other side. But it may be noted that the TMC supporter, whose house was perhaps unintentionally burnt by the attackers, is still staying in the village. The administration should be careful about future attacks and resurgence of law and order problem because it seems that there are people inciting some villagers to attack others. The women and the children are the worst victims of these attacks. The woman who gave birth to a child in this situation (Suchitra Dalui) and another pregnant woman (Putul Dalui) need special attention. The fact that the children are unable to go to school is another matter for concern. The primary school cannot be used as a shelter indefinitely. The rains are coming. It is urgent that apart from the emergency measures taken by the district administration, assistance for reconstruction and rehabilitation comes immediately.

### **Recommendations**

The Commission recommends that:

1. Police picket may be maintained in the village as long as necessary and strong measures are taken to diffuse the tension.
2. The district administration has taken some emergency measures. They should now do whatever is needful to ensure assistance for reconstruction and rehabilitation from the disaster management department.
3. The rehabilitation package should include compensation for loss of property.
4. A medical team may be sent to the village since the sub-centre is about three or four kilometers away.
5. The administration must make immediate arrangements to provide duplicate ration cards, epic cards and birth certificates to those who have lost them.
6. The administration may move through DRDC for setting up self-help groups as livelihood measures for women in the village who are willing.

**(DR. MALINI BHATTACHARYA)**  
**Chairperson,**  
**West Bengal Commission for Women**



**Govt. of West Bengal**  
**Office of the W.B. Commission for Women**  
**10, Rainey Park, Kolkata -700019**  
**Ph: 2474-5608/2486-5324**  
**Fax: 2486-5609**  
**E-mail: wbcw@vsnl.net**

**Report on visit of West Bengal Commission for Women to Tamruk and Haldia to meet women displaced by political violence in Purba Medinipur**

Commission received an intimation about women and children displaced by political violence before and after the Lok Sabha polls in East Medinipur from Paschim Banga Ganatantrik Mahila Samity on 26.4.09. The district administration does not have any records of these displaced women and children because they are not living in any official camps. However, from information given by the women's organisation mentioned above, we were able to meet about 40-50 such women and about a hundred such children in different places in Tamruk and Haldia on 20.6.09. The women are mostly from Nandigram, Khejuri and Bhajachauli and they left their homes either after the Panchayat elections or immediately before or after the Lok Sabha polls as a result of political violence. Some of them said that their houses have been burnt down or locked up after extensive looting, which has left them pauperized. There were two women in Haldia whose husbands have been brutally murdered. One was the wife of Khaleque Mallik of Garchakraberia and the other was Sakila Bibi, wife of Abdullah Khan of Jadubarichak. They are living in a state of extreme poverty with their children, some of whom are minors. They are now unable to go back home. We met Kanika Mondal of Sonachura, the mother of teenaged Sumita Mondal, who had been raped and murdered two years ago. Kanika Mondal, with her husband, are afraid of going back. We met a disabled girl Asma, daughter of Abdul Khaleque, whose wheelchair has been destroyed in the attack. In Tamruk, Ranu Dhali of Jahanabad, Khejuri- I, reported that her husband's limbs have been broken and he is under treatment. Riktata Das Mondal of Keyakhali, Satengabari, Nandigram - II, is a Group D staff at Takapura, Baikuntha Balika Vidyalaya. Since she is unable to reach her workplace, she is afraid that her job may be terminated. Commission members advised her to immediately apply to the DI, School Education, Purba Medinipur,

apprising the authorities of her situation in writing. Gauri Das, whom we met in Haldia, is an Anganwadi assistant from Kalicharanpur, GP - 9, and is also afraid of losing her job because of prolonged non-attendance. She was advised to report to the CDPO in writing. Many of the women informed us that their family has been torn apart because in some cases the husbands and/or some of the children had to be left behind. Some of them had been living in camps in Khejuri or Bhajachauli for quite some time, but after these camps were burnt down or occupied by armed miscreants they became displaced again. Some of them had some agricultural land or small business but the violent situation has led to a sudden loss of livelihood. Those who were able to, have shifted to relatives' houses in other parts of the state. But about one thousand persons are at present completely homeless and destitute. The school-going children are not going to school any more and the meagre amount of food in the unofficial camps is not sufficient for the nutrition of the children. Most of the women said that in spite of the criminal activities of looting their houses, arson, murderous attacks and enforced displacement, they are frightened of lodging FIRs with the police because they are afraid for the safety of their near and dear ones who are still in the areas under attack. We found women who had come to the camp only very recently, but some like Anju Dhara and her daughter-in-law Pratima Dhara have been moving from one camp to another for the last one year. Pratima's son Ranjit had been studying at Ramakrishna Mission school but has had to be withdrawn because they have no income.

### **Comment**

Terror and despair were written large on the faces of the women we met. All of them belonged to settled households and had some or other livelihood. They are not used to living on doles. This is why their agony and despair is all the more pronounced. The effect that this situation is having on children of a tender age is terrible. However, the political situation in the Nandigram area is still so violent that we do not know whether these women and children will ever be able to return home. The main problem is that the administration is not only unaware of their plight, but can give very little immediate *relief*. The Commission has noted time and again that political violence and instability always lead to women and children being

most vulnerable. It seems that in West Bengal such violence and instability has increased sharply in recent times. The Commission visited Nandigram during earlier incidents of violence and made recommendations to the Government to bring relief to affected women regardless of party affiliations. In Lalgarh, while giving its own investigation report on alleged police atrocities, it had also brought to the attention of the Government complaints of 'Maoist' violence on women. In this case also, we urge upon the Government to see that governance is restored in areas of Nandigram where political violence is going on, enabling the displaced to return home.

### **Recommendations**

1. We recommend that the district administration may identify women and children victims of political violence in the Nandigram area irrespective of their political affiliations and make some minimum immediate arrangements for relief such as clothes, medicines, ICDS services for children and some temporary arrangements for schooling for the children.
- 2.. Those whose houses were burnt down might get some relief from the disaster management fund.
3. So far as those who have some employment are concerned, it should be ensured that they do not lose their jobs because of enforced absence.
4. The most important thing is that the administration should see that the law and order situation is improved, and all bonafide residents of an area, whatever their party affiliation, may be allowed to return home.

**(DR. MALINI BHATTACHARYA)**  
**Chairperson,**  
**West Bengal Commission for Women**